UNIQUE TALES

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UNIQUE TALES

BY

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UNIQUE TALES.

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WILD ROSES

AND

A HAPPY FAMILY.

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WILD ROSES AND A HAPPY FAMILY.

I.

BARREN.

In an insignificant village, surrounded by sterile hills, a dog barked lustily for his mistress.

"Hush, Serafino!" said Rosette; "Dominus is praying."

This, in a whisper of the mistress—young and little, almost like the dog—from a first-story window; the highest story of the priory; for houses were there built on sand.

"Priory," was really a misnomer, applied because a retired clergyman lived in that ordinary building.

Another bark.

Out of another window peeped the house-

keeper, a corpulent affair; and cried in tones far harsher than Serafino's: "Hush the dog! Dominus is praying."

"I know, godmother," meekly said the child; "in vain I tried——"

The dog on the sand bench could not be appeased; and barks and retorts brought to the surface the prior in person, who, if he had prayed, had prayed during slumber.

"This wail," preached he in the pulpit (or rather at a third window), "signifieth not distemper, but forebodeth woe."

"Alas, apoplexy for me!"

"Mayhap, good matron," consoled Dominus, as he had done for years. "As to myself, the tickling of my throat forebodeth paralysis."

"Mayhap, good prior!" in the same vein.

"No fitter time for prayer," asserted Dominus.

In the oratory the three met and sat. What there by a layman might have been taken for a church organ was but a stand with hour-glasses of various sizes.

Sternly said the divine to Rosette: "Through my exertions you learned all my prayers—their length and shortness, as to words. The period hath arrived when, my voice failing, yours is summoned. In Hour of Trial be the prayer of this hour.

"How long, good matron, taketh it to roast the sand-birds?"

"Half an hour, prior."

"Forty-four minutes until dinner, leaveth fourteen minutes for our prayer."

Rosette, poor child, indeed knew all his prayers, but understood them as little in her native language as in Latin. She was now further admonished:

"Pray in English that your godmother may reap full benefit."

With her eyes on the turned fourteen-minute glass, Rosette proceeded, and in quickened tempo reached the end just when the last grain of sand left the upper vessel.

By this time Dominus was fast asleep.

"Leave master to his thoughts," said the

housekeeper, "while we prepare dinner. Fetch the pail!"

With its contents, sand, and a broom, the piece of corpulence shaped, on the kitchen floor, some figures resembling the curls of the prior's wig; then sank into a peculiar appurtenance of that kitchen—her easy-chair.

Thus enthroned she left, as usual, household cares to little Rosette, the silent sufferer.

Silent, truly; resigned no longer.

A secret nestled in her heart, and Serafino, her pet dog, had scented the secret's bearing upon his fate.

That secret was a longing, as indefinite as the fragrance conveyed to her in the flowerless land from lands unknown, because beyond the sterile hills.

The longing grew. Through prayer she might find relief. "Yea!" she reflected, "I'll form a prayer of my own!" Which prayer, hardly uttered, brought to her side a Presence high and awful, yet of air benign; of gaze which, though nor cold nor glowing, partook of

these extremes; clad in the glories of the seasons, wreaths of spring encircling all.

"Your supplication pleases me, dear child," said she, Dame Nature, and took her by the hand.

The dog stared and whined.

While the housekeeper endeavored to hush, the prior, at the other window, predicted woe, Rosette, leaving them to paralysis, apoplexy, and their devices, brushed by.

"Poor Serafino! Well, well—one day you also may strike out, and we may meet again!" was her farewell greeting.

II.

OUTSKIRTS OF SPRING.

How Rosette overcame crags and crevices, and dreary stretches directly beyond the hills, a bird might tell, could it but be caught.

With ever-increasing transports of joy, she had reached the land of her longing, and sang:

"Large is thy heart,
O beautiful Spring."

These, however, were but meadows, the outskirts of spring.

Where was Rosette's august companion? Everywhere.

Confidently the young pilgrim wandered on.

What joy, to breathe an air so balmy!

Clear and serene, the sky imparted joy to her breast.

Her steps, how nimble among flowers yellow,

purple, pink and crimson, wafting in the midst of high-grown grasses.

"How full of life and joy, all!" exclaimed she, describing her own being.

Blooming bushes began to enrich the scenery. Absorbed, she would delay here and there, then flit onward like a light-hearted bird.

"What happiness to wander thus forever!" was scarcely said, when she beheld from afar a being in appearance like herself, which upon approach revealed itself, amid a cluster of wild roses, all in bloom—as a stately rose tree with one bud.

Presently the bud developed into blossom, and the full-blown, exquisite pink rose meekly observed Rosette.

Speechless, enraptured, the child rested before the rose; then gave way to passionate addresses, while her little arms and hands partly stretched forth, partly receded toward her own yearning heart.

Her eyes still fixed upon the silent rose, Rosette again implored:

"Blessèd I to be the maiden
On whom first thine eye doth rest,
'Mid the stillness of the meadow
First thy fragrance is exprest.

"O may the eye thy glance now questions,
Lovely Rose! tell balm to thee;
The voice that these faint words addresses
Strength impart to set thee free.

"Rose of roses! round thee gathered
Are thy sisters, bloom-attired;
Roots they spread, and branch out idly,
Not, like thee, for flight inspired.

"Light and shadow is their pleasure,
Nod and napping their delight—
Yet their sing-song how restricted
With that brooklet just in sight.

"White are daisies, swift the swallows,
Green this grass—is all they know.
Rose! beyond that narrow brooklet
Seas may rock, blue flowers grow!

O to see them! What more precious
Than with thee o'er lands to rove!
Spread thee not in roots and branches;
Lift thy foot, O Rose, and move!"

Another pause—with lowered hands now clasped.

"Spontaneous verse works wonders. I'll indulge you!" said Dame Nature, visibly touching with her wand the rose tree, which anon developed into a blooming rose-maiden.

Rosette flung her arms round Rose. Oh, how they pressed each other to their hearts, and sallied forth, over meadow and brook, in equal flight. For their Protectress had endowed Rosette with the attributes of the new-born Rose, and bestowed upon them the gift of buoyancy on land and in air and water.

Although differing from elves and fairies, the rose-maidens had many traits in common with them, as the eluding of sight, hence dangers, in a country of verdure and bloom.

Wreath and sash across the chest and girdle, which adorned the maidens, were living rose-branches—trophies—respected in the recesses now entered with increasing enjoyment.

Large-hearted reception they met with everywhere.

Tidings brought from far off were greeted with sympathy, which, like an omnipresent

spirit, reached each flower, however lowly; each blade o' grass. That none of them lived neglected was one of the lessons taught to the little wanderers.

Where did they find food and shelter?

No bird but would have them share both with it.

Creepers suspended in mid-air heightened the effect of the tender foliage; and upon gazing through such lacework into the blue sky, Rose and Rosette believed they beheld heaven. It was a vision of summer; fulfillment of the promise of spring.

Their peregrinations over hill and dale were continued visits fraught with delight and consolation. Thus, once, descending, they were attracted by a beautiful blue flower, a-tremble from emotion.

"Who art thou?" they asked.

"A damsel woebegone."

"Thy name?"

"Forget-me-not."

"What ails thee?"

"I told her what my name implies; yet am forgotten."

"Describe thy friend and her abode."

"Beyond yon intervening hill the light-blue butterfly lives in the Heart of Spring."

III.

NUPTIALS IN THE HEART OF SPRING.

TOWARD that region Rose and Rosette repaired.

There perfect beauties of spring centered round a jewel of a pond; and many insects playfully chased each other over its lucid water; among them a pair of brilliant butterflies, light-blue their dominant color.

The rose-maids forthwith reported the suffering of the lonely forget-me-not.

"Oh, she is a friend of mine, whom I fancy well enough; but this my mate has a greater claim upon my pleasing companionship, and flights I prefer to reposeful attitudes."

"If you saw her, you would have pity on her."

"Unhappy people worry me indeed; so does this nearer, sad forget-me-not."

There, to be sure, stood near the bank, now reached by the flyers, another forget-me-not.

"What ails thee?" asked Rosette.

"I die of love."

"For whom?"

"For just an intellectual mate."

The rose-maids whispered to the butterfly.

The butterfly flew off, and in due course of time returned, reporting: "My friend is well and will consider."

Then turning to the love-sick flower-in-blue, she said:

"I think I have found a mate for thee."

The flower smiled and fixed the wedding day, which was no other than that selfsame day.

The trumpet tree then blew Hurrah, and the liveliest commotion, beginning on the tender growths that encircled the pond, spread deeply into the woods.

The happy hour, though not devoid of doubt, had arrived.

Bustle yielded to solemnity. Fluttering was the only noise.

Anon the blue butterfly rested the left wing lightly upon the forget-me-not; the other wing was just touched by an emerald dragon fly; larger insects joined, thus forming an ascendant semicircle. All mustered silently into line, at already considerable height enriched, by humming birds, finches, starlings, doves.

The festivity having been prearranged, the distant hillside had pursued a corresponding course, started by the blue-winged friend, whose right leaned on the damsel Forget-me-not; and upward, until an oriole crowned, above the intervening hill, the fluttering rainbow.

Upon a given sign the blue flower in the Heart of Spring tremulously whispered; and from neighbor to neighbor was passed, to the expectant Unseen, the whisper:

"I love thee! Dost thou love me?"

She had considered, and answered as firmly, as faintly:

"Yes."

"Wilt thou accept me for an intellectual companion?"

"Indeed and I will."

This, conclusive beyond a doubt, ended the ceremony; and great joy prevailed over the wedding of the forget-me-nots.

The performers of the rainbow at once performed aerial quadrilles; and "lame ducks," as in their high spirits they called rabbits, weasels, squirrels and the like, danced with turtles, lizards and each other in their own fashions to music of grasshoppers and crickets; of frogs in and outside of the pond; and of more or less melodious songsters.

The chief messengers between the happy bride and bridegroom were the blue butterflies; also the rose-maidens flew on many an errand of love.

The plan of bringing the lovers nearer to each other failed, through fear that the transplanted party might catch cold—a serious matter with flowers.

Sometimes Rose and Rosette visited the farther woods, to the choicest recesses of which they were mostly borne by an ever-ready white

stag and hind. Delightful as these excursions were, they always ended in returns to the pond with its poppies, rice plants, royal lilies, where, among diversified distractions, one happy day followed the other.

A new visitor arrived one morning. It was a heron, who said: "I see a few nice fishes in this water, and occasionally catch one. Pleasing enough, also, are these scant flowers on land, and the scanter blossoms in the air. No wonder that nothing thrives under such a light. If you care for the blessings of a land, where all is sunshine and bloom, follow me to my home!"

IV.

THE HEART OF SUMMER.

SUCH an allurement some could not resist, the rose-maids among them; and after long, expectant flight they landed in the Heart of Summer, bathed in the moon's mild light.

Before turning to his nest, the heron said: "Here the moon sheds more heat than the sun in your land;" this with a smile of contentment, maintained during their happy intercourse with him.

While the others, with many an ejaculation of delight, scattered in all directions, Rose and Rosette sank upon mosses; and there, holding each other's hands, listened, enraptured, to the nightingale's songs in praise of the rhododendrons and laurels which surrounded them.

That most of the blossoms of these copious bushes, so white in the moonlight, glowed red

in the morning, was a surprise. Well adapted was the richness of that hue to the wealth of colors displayed all around.

Truly had his home been painted by the heron. There, under a glowing sun, a rapid brook imparted life; luxuriant trees, coolness. Flowers, in numberless varieties, at the height of perfection, beamed there as so many expressions of love. Within hearing of the brook, a spacious place was carpeted with mosses. Enshrined by tropical trees, it was the home of flowers of every description, as also of berry-bearing herbs, and here and there a shrub comparable only with a nosegay.

Countless birds frequented that grove, their songs and plumages contributing to the enchanting gayety. A choice resort with manifold diversions, one surpassing the other; and after the heron had jumped rope—live vines which Rose and Rosette had been turning—he soared aloft, and with another happy smile looked down on the rose-maids following in less impulsive flight.

Rose returned to the jonquil who had yet to complete her biography.

Rosette steered her course for a marigold in order to learn a new history.

Similar calls were daily occurrences; and the stories depicted perfect happiness, because the narrators were in the prime of happy life.

After separate visits the tales were commented upon from the standpoint of roses.

Of endless interest were the narrations of the laurel trees and rhododendrons, each growth with a pedigree.

What a succession of blissful days and nights!

"Sweet is sleep; our waking-hours are sweeter—
Awake, awake, to new delights of summer!"

Full-toned songs, like this, gradually abated; and the last sweet bird, a wren, sang thus:

I weep. I mourn
O'er passing summer.
Stem with thorn—
What sad newcomer.

I mourn. I weep
O'er what delighted.
I long for sleep,
All cheer benighted.

Stem and thorn,
  Where rose-leaves shaded.
Maid forlorn
  With blossom faded.

Joys, joy flown,
  Songs, song must wither.
Alone, alone
  On dying heather.

The sadness of the song made Rose shiver and long to see her sisters, whereto her companion consented.

Sad were Rosette and Rose over the melancholy of the beloved wren. They flew to it and surprised it by the consolation, that there were a South and other summers.

Thereupon it started with a merry chirp toward that blessed country; while the rose-maidens hied over formerly traversed grounds; and so true were their instincts that, in spite of dense mists, they reached Rose's native field at midnight.

Rosette at once settled to sleep.

Rose, upon beholding her drooping sisters, fell also asleep; but hers was the sleep of death.

Ere fairly awake, Rosette fancied the wren's song to be acted out on herself; but before having time for alarm (so sympathetic is Dame Nature!) the survivor became aware of a presence near her—a boy beaming with spirits, who, tendering his hand, said: "Offspring of a winter rose am I—Montrose by name. Mourn not my valley friend, but gone to sleep, from which she will awake next spring, re-braced."

V.

AUTUMN AND WINTER.

To Rostock, who had been Rosette, he spoke: For, to adapt the maiden to the new wild companion, Dame Nature had transformed her into a youth; and, with outcries of delight, the two rushed forth over wolds, through woods.

Pervaded by Montrose's wild spirit, also Rostock let deer and fox pass unmolested, as too tame for consideration.

In mountain caves, in valley caverns, the youths were recognized as masters. Companionships like these were all-sufficient to them.

To gratify exuberance, many a precipice was scaled on wing or on foot.

When a sea breeze touched them on a clear autumn day, their impetuous speed was maintained until the shore of an ocean was reached.

Montrose forthwith dashed into the foaming spray.

Rostock recoiled, partly because it was night.

Almost threatening seemed the gestures of Montrose. Rostock plunged in after him, and they proceeded merrily.

They felt one with the element.

Only when land was out of sight, Montrose said: "Let us take a rest."

Floating, they watched a couple of albatrosses, and paddled toward them unperceived.

The sun ascended from the ocean, and phosphorescence subsided into wonderful glows.

With the exultant feeling that the world was created for themselves, Montrose seized, and swung himself unto, one of the albatrosses.

Rostock, again admonished, followed his example. "Spurs and reins like thorns!" screeched the large birds.

Thus the rose-youths took another rest.

Both were carried above the highest rocks.

Espying eagles, Montrose guided his albatross to the steep cliff where they nested.

Rostock's bird drew reluctantly nearer, but was also forced forward.

By this time the species and size of the eagles could be determined: They were formidable golden eagles.

On a large nest they perched, stunned by astonishment.

To pounce on the larger, and subdue him, was Montrose's work of a moment.

Rostock no less overpowered the mother-bird, after furious resistance.

Still greater ascendency had the youths gained after having averted a deadly combat between the eagles and albatrosses.

The birds were warned to remain friendly; which promised, all four received a liberal portion of petting, and the mutual affection grew to the extent that the rose-youths were allowed to sleep in the eagle's nest containing five eggs.

Three rests, close upon each other! Lazy urchins, were they not?

Montrose, however, slept with one eye open.

Furthermore, at dawn the albatrosses invited

the youths to another ride. This, Montrose declined, as he desired to exercise his own wings.

With mutual protestations of love and esteem, they parted, the spirited flight of Montrose being watched with curiosity.

Rostock, still on the edge of the cliff, flapped his wings like a newly fledged bird; took heart, and joined the friend's sail toward a densely wooded district.

For a long time they maintained unnecessary heights.

"The higher we soar," said Montrose, "the more are we part of the elements."

When the forest lay underneath them they darted into its dead branches and buried leaves.

Then Montrose shook hands with his companion, declaring him to be a youth after his own heart.

Their life in these woods during winter was well adapted to their singular natures.

The forest swarmed with ferocious beasts, all of whom yielded to these fierce, yet friendly youths.

Through such close intercourse Rostock also became acquainted with the mysteries of animal-life. The caves were wonders suited to the tales there told.

What the youths avoided, was shelter. Exposed to the wildest snowstorms, they felt in their element; and the beasts, trembling in comparative security, often heard by night shouts of delight amid breaking branches. No wonder they bowed to the indomitable rose-youths!

The intense cold abruptly subsisded.

A few more days, and the icicles on the trees began to weep. Montrose looked solemn. His buoyancy was not quite as of old. So he mounted a boar; Rostock the nearest beast on hand, a jackal; and these were hurried through the forest. At its border the youths spread their wings, steering direct for the Eagle-cliff with its invigorating storm-winds.

The ascent of Montrose being unprecedentedly labored, Rostock checked his flight accordingly.

The five eggs had by this time developed into formidable young eagles. Forth from five beaks there suddenly arose the cry: "Parents! flying porcupines are approaching!"

Father and mother at once bid a smiling reception, and silence and self-control up to a given moment, as those strong birds had nursed them in their nest and were benefactors in general.

The rose-youths had a fine reception; suspiciously so, thought Montrose, seeing the hosts in such broad smiles.

"Where are my albatrosses?" he demanded harshly.

"Just on a fishing expedition."

"You have not ill-treated them, I trust," was retorted; "or I should twist the neck of each one of you," with a voice feigning temper, but really weak from exhaustion.

To Rostock he whispered, thereby causing him to change color:

"On account of waning strength my heart is breaking. Betray me not, or you are lost, for

without my inciting co-operation you could not cope with these seven."

"Is this cutting air still wanting in sharpness?" whispered the other; "why not dive into the Heart of Winter?"

"Too late—too late. Support me, keeping close to me."

Without much ado Rostock threw himself upon a parent eagle; and Montrose just managed to mount the other.

Both eagles were kept so close together, that Montrose remained within reach of his friend.

Only too glad seemed the birds, not to be spurred on toward the sea for an audience with the albatrosses.

"Whither are you reining?" asked Rostock.

"To the home of my forefathers."

And there, on the yet bleak mountain, the winged bearers were discharged; and Montrose, reclining on one of the hillocks within a square inclosure formed by low cedars, muttered: "Go forth, good friend! to the most beautiful Rose in the blooming Valley of Spring, with the mes-

sage—sad and strange—that my last thoughts—encompassed—her."

Rostock tore himself off.

While descending, he became possessed of a singular light-heartedness, and felt himself undergoing a change, as yet but vague.

Already had he set foot upon tracts bestrewn with verdure, whose richness increased on his downward path.

How mild, how sweet the air! Appreciably more so as he proceeded into the Valley of Spring—one field of young flowers, a world of fragrancy bathed in the rays of the sun.

And fairer than ever, the wild Rose of Spring there met and embraced—Rosette, again transmuted from Rostock into the former rose-maiden, which restoration she welcomed.

The message of Montrose was received with faint sadness and blush.

Dame Nature, no doubt, felt rewarded for indulging the roses, who, thanks to her indulgence, performed their beautiful plays.

VI.

ANOTHER SPRING AND A HOME.

Joy again pervaded the maidens. The past was forgotten, the joyful present all, all to them.

After having enjoyed the greater part of spring in the valley, their strolls over smiling hills were unexpectedly brought to a standstill by a human habitation.

A small triangular patch of grass, protected by chains suspended from three granite pillars, adorned the foreground; and the rose-maids, overawed by the strangeness of all this, would, no doubt, have flown away to the free country, had not the artistic arrangement of plants in a vase, within that green inclosure, fascinated them.

And furthermore a sound like a shrill bark—

"This surely is my Serafino!" exclaimed Rosette.

Both listened.

Rosette had loved her little dog; and that love now returned.

A faint, whining sound was now heard—in the direction of other quarters, sheltered by an old wall, only then observed on the right; a narrow lane, darkened by the height of the wall, ran alongside of it until withdrawn from sight by some descent.

The wall was compact except for a small wooden door.

On the spur of the moment Rosette had rung the bell; and with throbbing heart both waited.

Anon the door flew open by means of a wire contrivance wrought by some figure on the upper steps leading into a low, solid, brownstone manor.

Or were there two somebodies?

Although not distant, they could not yet be discerned, owing to the evening twilight.

"Are you not here, my dear Serafino?"

"Not a bit!" a voice on the upper landing, immediately echoed from a side of the wall-inclosed garden, which, extending from the right, made a turn behind the manor.

"No?" still questioned the maidens, prone to turn back.

But the thick door had flung to with a bang.

They hesitated, yet felt themselves allured to the stairs—the platform.

And there Rose beheld the first human beings, so transcendently lovely, so touchingly attractive, that she at once yielded to their caresses, the same as Rosette.

Two little, frail widows in black these were, each with lovely, oval face, and blue eyes expressive of love and sadness.

Thus resembling each other, they could neither be denoted as the older nor the younger, because they were twins.

Their combined age of one hundred and eighty-five years was not extraordinary in that family.

However, their names are sufficiently dis-

tinct for written records, showing Jane to have been the mother of a son; Eliza a daughter's mother.

"Didn't I tell you?" asked the latter; a question echoed in the background.

"Not a bit!" her sister's answer, repeated in some darker distance.

But why these tears in mother Eliza's sweet eyes?

While Jane, with all the ardor feebleness could command, caressed Rose; Eliza, drawing Rosette toward her heart, asked for her name.

"Rosette."

"Didn't I tell you!" This assurance, triumphantly uttered over and again, was joined by the mysterious voice in the same joyous accents.

This time Jane did not contradict.

Coincidence here sweetened life. Rosette was indeed the name of Eliza's daughter, who had married, died, been bemourned, forgotten, save only as a child. Her hood, in mother Eliza's

toilet box, had revived but such memories; oblivion of the rest was just as well. The little girl's return had confidently been expected; and there she was, fresh like a rose, adorned with rose-leaf garlands.

The tender treatment wrought sensations so blissful to the maidens that they were persuaded to delay. Neither of them had known a mother. To receive a mother's affection—one as actual, the other as adopted daughter—that was a charm of power incalculable.

With the same fascinating solicitude, the mothers endeavored to interest them in many curiosities in the house.

The daughters then repaired to bed—to Rose an entirely, to Rosette a comparatively new experience.

A more appropriate apartment could not have been assigned to them. Brilliant tapestry depicted tropical forest scenes; and furniture: large, elegantly curved leaves of light and lighter green, forth from which burst flowers gaudy almost like a sun.

But now to sleep on scented pillows soft as down!

Thus bedded, they slumbered till, at dawn, awakened by songs and shrieks, yelps and howls, as if tenants of forests and deserts were within the garden walls.

Such was indeed the case!

The corner room gave on both sides of the garden; and each maiden gazing out of separate windows expressed to the other her astonishment at the sights.

Lined all along the rectangular wall were cages filled with superb animals—a veritable menagerie.

Spirited morning songs or yet loud laments were theirs.

Before the lion had roared forth to the sun the cruelty of his fate, a voice had shrieked to the maidens: "Good-morning! Didn't I tell you?"

"So the parrot was the rogue last night!" said Rose.

"Not a bit!" croaked the raven, claiming part of the roguery for himself.

The favorite expressions of the widows had evidently been caught by the birds.

Alternating avenues of trees, grass-plots, flower-beds, presented a pleasing garden, within which bloomed another garden in a conservatory so exuberantly filled with plants and fruits that they seemed to uphold its glass dome.

Pleasantly animated by this concentration of animal and vegetable kingdoms, the visitors flitted into the breakfast room, where the mothers were awaiting, and rapturously embraced them. In this household all were early risers.

There was the marked difference between supper and breakfast table, that at supper lukewarm milk, and lady-fingers were served; at breakfast lukewarm milk and little swan-necks —both of the same biscuit consistency, but of shapes as indicated by the names.

Then it also came to light that, like his father and uncle, Jane's son Theobald, called Theo,

was a great zoölogist, botanist—in short, naturalist—who, in the course of years, had, for purposes of his own, collected the beasts caged in the garden; many a capture entailing a stirring adventure, as indeed did the obtainment of plants. Short were Theo's stays at home, most of his time being spent on exploring expeditions. His returns were mother Jane's days of balm, only disturbed by the apprehension of new departure. Theo's last absence was of particularly long duration, harder than ever to bear by a mother strong in love, however otherwise enfeebled.

"Oh, return soon, darling Theo!" had his mother said at the last parting. "Do tell me at what time you will return?"

To this Theo, hastening away, had jocosely replied: "At three o'clock."

"At three?" she asked with earnestness.

"Oh, yes," his light answer; "as soon as all my animals make friendship with each other and the household people."

Deeper, the longer the darling remained ab-

sent, became the impression wrought by these playful words.

The old ladies now settled down to a play at dominos, their only game. It was their custom to call out the number required from the partner.

The rose-maids looked on amused.

"Six!" called out mother Jane.

After a remarkably long pause mother Eliza matched six and challenged four.

Jane supplied that number and called for blank.

Blank matched, Eliza enunciated "Three!"

Hastily mother Jane arose, left the room, and waited for a long time on the stoop for her son's ring of the bell.

Crestfallen, her "Not a bit" scarcely audible, she returned and rang the bell on the mosaic table.

A white-aproned maid servant asked for her pleasure.

"Bring us tear-kerchiefs!" said her mistress. "We are weeping."

Eliza, to be sure, wept too; but more for company's sake, since she had found her daughter.

Presently silken kerchiefs were presented on a waiter.

Fastidious ladies were these mothers; as neat and nice as any of the dainty sex.

On that day the game was not resumed.

When, later on, the daughters joined in the play, they knew no better but that, as soon as "three" was reached, the game was ended. That number called, poor mother Jane, "three o'clock" in mind, invariably started on her hopeless errand to the outside stairs.

At dinner there were served milk, eggs and menagerie-crackers, the various forms of which Jane arranged and moved on the tablecloth somewhat like chessmen, while mumbling: "As soon as all his animals make friendship with each other and the household people, he will return."

Eliza squashed the tiger under her milk-bowl, ejaculating: "Horrid creature!"

"Cuckoo! cuckoo! cuckoo!"

"Three o'clock!" cried Jane, and went, and returned.

"Not a bit!" protested her sister and the raven; and they were right, because that counterfeit cuckoo-clock struck three at any hour it pleased the caged cuckoo to intonate his song, while the real clock mouldered in the garret.

After dinner it was the duty of an East Indian to report to the ladies.

Languidly, they listened to him as they would to an organ-grinder; they knew so well the song of Alec; a man in his best years, of picturesque appearance, the blackness of eye and beard well contrasting with his many-colored array.

On him devolved the charge of the animals and the task of reconciling them to each other.

Successful in but a few instances, disappointed in many, he had lost all vim and drifted away from the desired end.

That perseverance is needed by a trainer, he was testing on himself; for, after unrelenting kindness had endeared Theo to him, he now, in the absence of his master, felt a revival of grudge against Theo for having captured him in the jungle with a lasso.

Hence the intention of an exit on Theo's return.

Meanwhile his station pleased him well enough; more even since the advent of the Roses, so called in the manor, who seemed to stir his energies, as was at first perceived by some animation in his report:

"Lion and lamb, both in one cage, my ladies! continue friendly. Jaguar and panther, however, are at odds. Like friends they played together. The jaguar then retired into his cage. The jaguar, said I? Not so. The jaguar, less his tail, caught in the tight spring wire door. Like an ex-friend the tail was anon belabored by the panther, and could only be extricated by main force."

"Watch, appease, and report!" said Lady

Jane, with two smiles for one frown, the smiles shared by the others.

———

The garden was a relief to the rose-maids.

Rose called the manor a hollow; the garden, owing to its high old wall, a cave. All seemed to her so compressed, so strange; bearable by virtue of that strangeness and the liberal "air-hole," which was the sky, admitting fresh breaths into the cave.

After having gone the rounds of the cages, the Roses, always eagerly watched, would rest on one or the other of the rustic benches; and the roaring, intended for their ears, had an endearing sound; for the beasts loved the children of Nature; indeed, these seemed to exercise a soothing influence on that brute world.

Without reminiscences, Rosette's glance strayed from the eagle to the neighboring pelican, while a flower bed sometimes awakened indistinct recollections.

———

By liberal admission of air, required by ward

and daughter, the dear old ladies, hitherto so timid of draughts, profited visibly. Their desire to please was more manifest on rainy days, when, without saying much, they listened to the spirited conversation, only in part intelligible to them. Sometimes they inserted one of the few remembered sayings which, even misapplied, amused themselves and were suggestive to the Roses.

The haggard hands now grasped, then stroked, and tender eyes endeavored to engage young glances of affection.

Fossils, antlers, botanical rarities were shown; treasure boxes were displayed, appreciated.

Before a glass-globe filled with flowers, whose cut stems appeared magnified in the water, Rose changed color, and explained that the sight of mangled flowers hurt her.

None of that kind again adorned the mantelpiece.

"From our wax flowers," was rejoined, "you did not shrink."

"Because," answered Rose, "statuettes are to our liking."

This so pleased the ladies that they henceforth often moulded wax after live plants in fancy flowerpots, the rose-maids admiringly watching the exquisite process; and what they admired became gifts for them.

Their rose-leaf interwoven attire somewhat disturbed Eliza.

"We wear weeds; they, leaves," said Jane.

"True enough," said Eliza, an Echo emphasizing the remark.

Dominos were played no more without the Roses.

Alec resumed his report:

"The story of the jaguar's tail, caught in the wire door, my ladies, has a sequel: Again I forced the two to play together; like friends they played. The panther's onslaught seemed forgottten until the jaguar made his exit—headforemost not again. To save his tail he backed into the spring door; clinched were

his fists, his smiles how lavish, while he slowly backed and safely backed into his cage, whither the other, being larger, could not follow to renew the play."

Eliza looked at Jane, Rosette at Rose. Their smiles turned into laughter. Offended, Alec withdrew.

Then only occurred to him the ludicrous part of the game; and he was found, holding his sides, by the maid servant, who hurried to be on hand. The clock was striking three.

But Alec had an important report to deliver. After Lady Jane's return from the stoop, he was again admitted, and reported: "By untiring observation, my ladies! I discovered the enmity between wolf and lynx to be one-sided. Therefore, I gave to the lynx more than his due, and left him oversatiated in the corner, four neatly dressed legs of mutton just within his reach. I then withdrew the partition, when against him flew the hungry wolf. Meeting, beyond a snarl, no opposition, he grasped the nearest tidbit; a second one; devoured another

leg and still another; then, like the lynx, withdrew into his quarter's farthest corner, both ogling, snarling at each other—nothing more. I closed the cages. This, yesterday. To-day I brought them together, unfed. No doubt the wolf had taken the four mutton legs for a peace offering. Both beasts are now fast friends, thanks to my strategy."

"This news," said Lady Jane, "is reassuring. Your skill will doubtless be rewarded by your master."

"Our progress, madam, is impeded by the royal tiger."

"The horrid beast!" interjected Lady Eliza.

"Alone, confronted with each other, lion and tiger are on good terms. Separate them, usher the lamb——"

"The darling little snow-white lamb!"

"Usher the lamb into the lion's cage, and the tiger's frenzy is beyond description. The lamb he cannot suffer outside of himself; the lion he wants to kill as its protector. Woe, woe to beast or man at such a time within the royal tiger's grasp!"

"Words unworthy of a tamer," retorted Lady Jane.

"Consider, madam, that his hatred against me, connected with his capture, is uncommon. I knew this tiger's den. I knew his predilection for man's calf. The knowledge that there exist artificial eyes, legs and what not, suggested to me an aggravation of my calves. Thus provided, I, as if unconscious of his nearness (for who would so quietly turn the back to such a monster?) I challenged him. He was upon me with a furious bound, burying his teeth into my artificial calf, whereupon I took to my heels, all the time spending the tape, which unwound itself as from a roller.

"This calf," argued the tiger, "is obviously part of the man;" while master easily flung the——"

"Butterfly catcher," rebuked Lady Eliza.

"Exactly," humored Alec, half-perplexed—"flung the net over, and captured him. And the tiger never forgave me."

Unmoved as the recital had left the Roses,

mother Eliza's irony moved them to hearty merriment.

Mother Jane remained absorbed in a scheme of her own.

VII.

WHAT A VENTURE!

WHILE a storm of almost equinoctial character betokened the wane of summer, the rose-maids fashioned, under affectionate guidance, their maiden wax flowers, first and last touches to which consumed quite a number of pleasurable days.

Neglecting the animals, Alec studied in his apartment a map of Australia, mistaken for one of Asia. All with a view to deserting.

The old gardener's chief occupation was rest; the young maid-servants', gossip within closed doors.

Under these circumstances the field was clear for the accomplishment of good mother Jane's design.

As Alec, with his long-distance iron hook

and poker, was deemed a coward and a liar, she herself must pluck up courage and effect reconciliation between the animals, whereby Theo would be led back into her arms.

Softer than ever were her steps, now directed toward the farther cages; yet she could not elude the many watchful eyes of the animals.

"Good-morning!" said the parrot, although it was afternoon—an anachronism no doubt learned in a land where an afternoon performance is called matinée.

The beasts, passed without the usual salute, looked after her in surprise.

The huge tiger stopped his tramp when catching her searching eyes.

King of the desert, erect though reposing, changed his distant gaze into a look most close.

Without misgiving Jane climbed into the cage of the lamb.

The little pet approached her and was told: "You are so sweet; look soon your sweetest."

Her kindly touch, her soothing voice pleased

the lamb; and presently the lion begged for his share.

Jane unbarred, left that inner door wide open, and gently laid her arms around the lion; he was so big that there was much to pet.

"Continue good," she said, "and all of us will yet be happy."

Peculiar contortions underwent the lion's muzzle ere clearly enunciating "Good mamma."

Then he settled in a posture of comfort.

The lamb reposed on a couch in its cage.

Jane, seated near the lion on a footstool for a little rest and reflection, was soon attracted by the royal tiger. Rolling and purring he seemed to invite the frail little lady in black to visit him.

So she unbolted, bolted, and was with him.

The giant tiger behaved toward her much like a pleased kitten; and the visitor returned his endearments, whispering to him that the lamb was beloved everywhere, and that the

tiger would be admired and loved by man and beast if he protected the lamb with the lion.

The animal listened attentively.

His mood seemed to warrant a trial. The tail still wagged, affection was still expressed by eye and purr.

Precious time must not be lost. But while she went to the iron door in order to unite the three, the lamb approached her, the lion keeping pace. In an instant the tiger became a terror of first magnitude. By the force of his onslaught the heavy bars were bent where mother Jane had just stood.

The lamb was safe—was she?

Lion and lamb as yet engaged the frantic tiger.

Egress to the garden was barred. No matter with what danger, she must retreat through the cage occupied by the large brown bear, Bruno.

While busy with that bolt, the thoughts crossed her mind, that she could not yet be spared; that her son might marry, and who

would then take care of his children and children's children?

Safely in Bruno's domain, she found him to be a respecter of manners and age. Simply lovely was his behavior. Stroke her he did; even danced with her until she said: "Enough, dear child! though I'm less old than thou thinkest."

He then smilingly petted her on the back, most excellent Bruno did; and virtually assisted the dear lady in unbolting the door for herself and bolting it for himself.

Turning toward him on the lawn she saw him, the right paw over his heart, still smiling upon her.

"You are a very good boy!" she said to him.

To the growling tiger, with ears still thrust back and teeth still gnashing, she said: "Just as wicked as wicked can be."

When Jane entered the drawing room the wax statuettes had developed admirably. In spite of that enjoyable pastime Rosette had

quite missed her aunt. "I will tend her more steadily," the child said to herself; "for both she and mother are in great need of my services."

Not that Rose had been unmindful; but whatever were Rosette's abnormal attributes, in Rose they prevailed in a higher degree.

As to the conditions for Theo's return, no member of the household took mother Jane's view seriously.

On the next day Alec interrupted the game at dominos.

"In spite of unceasing care, my ladies—"

"In future," said Lady Jane, with unusual sternness, "only progress is to be reported. Keep all in order; and as results can only be produced by visits in the cages, use this (handing him a purse) for purchase of iron mask and armor to shield your person on the battle fields."

Friendly union of the animals she no longer expected. However, there remained "Three o'clock," in other words—Hope.

VIII.

ANOTHER HOME.

SUMMER had to yield to autumn, and with summer Rose appeared to fade.

A wild alarm seized all, and, bathed in tears, Rosette addressed Dame Nature:

"Mother, mother, Mother Nature,
Look upon this lovely maid!
Wan her cheek, rose-wreath though fading,
Call her not beyond your aid.

"Of the myriads on the meadows
Her you chose to wander round,
To encourage and enlighten
Whom in darkness she there found.

"Birds in need of you she tended;
Fishes owed their rescue to
Her hand; embarrassed deer she guided,
Saving all to worship you.

"And the rambles, flights and swimming
Of this child of Nature were
Ecstasies which in a measure
With your favorite you did share.

"Enjoy with her your bracing winter,
Muff and wrister and chilblain;
Let her see ghosts of rose-sisters
On the freezing window-pane!

"And when snowflakes, tired of dancing
With shrill winds, rest on the earth,
Let her, joyous of their pleasures,
Doubly value this warm hearth.

"Mother! surely of these blessings
You will not your child deprive—
Mother, mother, Mother Nature,
Hear my prayer, O save her life!"

"Spontaneous combustions like these, dear child! are pleasing." In melodious voice she, in whose raiment glorious tints of autumn predominated, continued: "Your playmate shall be saved on two conditions."

"Oh, name them, good Dame Nature!"

"That of attributes of a wild rose you be divested."

"Willingly; so she but live."

"Have Rose transferred to the adjacent greenhouse, where in artificial summer she will prosper, provided she continue missionary work," which said, the Power vanished.

Rosette, of rose leaves shorn, then felt like any child that has not been a rose; and what she lost she gained in other ways.

With warmth, enchanting the good mothers, she revealed to them the secret of Rose.

Presently all thoughts were directed to the object neglected by all save the venerable gardener, the conservatory. Who, indeed, would during the hot season, with plenty of choice garden flowers in the open air, have thought of entering a hothouse? Nobody less than Rose and Rosette.

At the glass door the gardener met them with a shake of the head, indicating that he could make no success of the plants.

"What ails them?" asked Rose.

"Too much or too little of everything."

"Maybe a secret sorrow," said Rose. "Leave me alone with them, good friends."

When she entered, and all the flowers turned their countenances toward her, she perceived them to be troubled, because they were not fair.

Aware that flowers are rather quintessence of love, than of thought, she addressed these in accordance with their reasoning powers.

"Why art thou unhappy?"

"I die in envy of my neighbor, owing to the fragrancy which she exhales," whined a double, black-eyed Susan.

"Just reflect on thy stature as compared with the lowness of the violet."

And Susan reasoned it all out, and became happy, hence beautiful.

So did the violet, who, through blind jealousy, never once had thought of her own exquisite advantage.

The enthusiastic outcry followed:

"We have an Apostle of Nature among us, well worth listening to."

Such indeed Rose proved to be, reconciling all of them thus removed from the direct influence of Nature.

Azaleas and cinerarias, who had even envied the ivy for being no flower at all, again beamed with joy. The maid-of-the-mist, inconsolable no longer that she were not bathed in genuine mist, doubly appreciated the beauty of the delicate verdure which enshrined her, a picture of prettiness. No flower but bloomed at her best; begonias spread their leaves to the fullest, myrtles, oleanders, their pride how becoming! Lemon tree, orange tree, erect like the palms that only bent to the glass roof's bidding.

At the sight of all this magnificence the gardener stood like one transfixed; then crossed himself, and mumbling something about "survival of the fittest," and constellations, betook himself to the fire house with its ovens and water tanks, where he devoted himself to supplying the conservatory during the cold months.

He looked through one of its panes when regulating the heat, even at the outside fearful of the charm connected with that fairy palace.

In its temperate air Rose had soon recovered; and she flourished with flowers for com-

panions, juicy tropical fruits for food, and velvet cushions for comfort. Under her care each plant gloried in its existence, and thus sprang forth wonderful tales of happiness, unrepeatable where only a short tale may be told within a long one.

Rosette had lost—and did not miss—the gift of understanding the language of flowers. Rose she loved, but with another love. Rosette loved flowers and loved Rose as a flower. Aware that her friend was perfectly happy alone with the thriving flowers, her visits became less frequent.

So much the more assiduous was her care of the dear old mothers.

From day to day these had hoped for a change of the icy weather in order to pay a visit to the beloved Rose.

The moon, the stars shone brightly; somewhat relenting seemed the cold, when mother Jane said: "To-morrow we must surely see dear Rose."

Eliza meekly protested, then consented.

Rosette begged to consult Copernicus, the weather prophet.

The gardener felt highly honored by such calls, to which he responded in Sunday attire. Reverentially he said: "A northern snow-storm will carry the day."

Rosette begged for delay.

Sadly Jane then said: "I shall not sleep a wink till I have seen her."

So all agreed, fair weather or foul.

Lo! What weather! The lower the mercury, the higher the storm-swept snow.

"Dear mothers, wait!"

> "Ever delay,
> And lose the day,"

sang the mothers cheerfully, and enveloped themselves in one set of furs after the other, until the wardrobe was as empty as momentarily the way to the hothouse was cleared of snow.

And when the dear ladies crossed over, they, their lovely faces hidden by tenfold thicknesses, looked like Eskimos with a vengeance;

and the caged beasts looked at them, astounded —the polar bear, with an expression so sad that it might have been attributed to homesickness; a peculiar kind of snowbirds gave them a startled look.

A jubilee, a day of bliss unrivaled this was in the fragrant, the blooming summer house!

Nectar was served and ambrosia.

The guests returned and were no worse for the adventure; however, the furs were packed away for the winter.

Storms and bright days interchanged with each other; yet the brightness was but cold.

The wand of spring, would it never be wafted?

Impatiently was Copernicus summoned.

"Tell us, when will green-house temperature prevail out-of-doors?"

"Daytime is unfavorable for prophecy. Night sky willing, lifelong practice shall assert itself to-morrow."

The night drew near; clouds too, they scattered; clear became the atmosphere.

Next day Copernicus declared:

"May the first:
Day the first
Of hothouse temperature."

"Six weeks to wait? Good gardener, make it shorter."

"Impossible. Barometer, and stars, and rosary agree."

"Which gives us time for preparation, and if your prophecy comes true, a high honor shall be conferred upon you."

The gardener doubted not, and took reverential leave.

IX.

NEW DEPARTURES.

BEHOLD the first of May arisen like a miracle! The sun spread greenhouse air; birds, visiting the green and blooming garden, were full of songs of brook and meadow. Spring's charm rejoiced the animals in the cages.

A day when life meant joy.

And the household people stepped forth; Jane and Eliza quite swiftly, with purple ribbons in their caps for May-day celebration.

To the conservatory their steps were directed, where Rosette lifted the radiant Rose (light as a feather) into the good ladies' cross-folded hands.

In this festive fashion she was carried past the cheering servants upon a throne suited to such a unique fête champêtre.

A smile of happiness dwelt on his countenance when Copernicus, placing a crown upon her head, proclaimed Rose May-queen.

She thanked all round; with dignity and grace she prayed that those of her greenhouse friends, whom she had labeled with a crimson heart of love, be transplanted into the garden.

"The less restricted their environment,
The larger-hearted are their thoughts——"

This just uttered, the bell announced a caller. Poor mother Jane held her breath.

"Didn't I tell you?" she said faintly.

Alec on the stoop pulled the wire.

The heavy door sprang open, and as quickly closed.

"Not a bit!" said Eliza; and parrot and raven confirmed.

Forth stepped, or rather flew—so rapid was the motion—a figure like a dwarf, yet manly to the utmost.

With a thorn switch he raised the wind and whipped it so that it sighed and yelled · and the

shrill sounds brought each one of the animals on its feet.

With more than eagerness all stared, with awe.

Before Rose, the queen, he halted, bent his knee; he offered her his hand.

She faintly blushed. She raised him, whispered in his ear.

Rosette he knew not; him, she perchance regarded like a vision once seen in a dream.

The ladies, at first perplexed, were reassured by his kind look; and sympathized when with emotion he exclaimed: "Found, found at last! A happy man, I bring good news!"

All lived in glad expectancy.

"Are you all happy, too?"

Rosette explained what ailed good mother Jane.

Rose then burst out: "Montrose! Why are you clothed in such a heavy bear-suit, fitting garment but for winter?"

"Evolution!" cried Montrose merrily.

There was heard a snickering.

Strange to say, the donkey, at least the wild donkey or yet the zebra, was the first one to understand.

"What?" asked the owl.

"Evolution!" shouted Montrose more lustily.

The donkey snickered.

"What means that funny word?" asked others.

The donkey answered: "That he, an embodied winter rose, hath, in the course of transmigration, now reached the stage of transformation into a bear."

The owl then also snickered; so did its neighbors; the contagion spread—the watchword: "Less bud, more bear," reached the hyena, who burst into the wildest fits of laughter, soon joined by hilarious roars of lion, tiger and the like.

Not less heartily laughed the domestics; laughed Rose and Rosette and Eliza; even mother Jane's tears of bitterness had turned into tears of merriment.

One great interest uniting all, Montrose, with

the shout, "Now or never!" flew from bolt to bar. Each cage was opened, emptied; his presence was enough, the thorn switch whipping but the air.

The lamb he had gently deposited on the lawn, where all assembled in sweet harmony.

Bruno, the bear, said to Montrose: "Glad to meet you, brother."

Montrose shook claws: "Glad, too," he said—fuel for more uproarious laughter.

The rose-switch only smote the air. Couples were formed as for a dance on the lawn.

This achieved, Montrose flew to its center, his gaze uplifted, as all thought, to Rose. But near her (visible but to the two) stood majestic Dame Nature, blessed them, blessed all, and pronounced the bowing Montrose henceforth free from bearish fetters. Rose also thanked her. For dance the frames of the jolly beasts were too shaking. A grand promenade was therefore arranged.

Between lion and tiger walked mother Jane and the lamb.

Mother Eliza, then asked by the smiling tiger for a partner, accepted his forearm; and after some rounds was overheard to say: "To think, that I ever called you a horrid creature!"

"Happily," had answered the tiger, "there are sweet afterthoughts."

To her partner elephant the giraffe incidentally remarked: "Even if lifted upon your trunk, I could not peep over this wall." Humorously trumpeting: "For a' that I can peep through the conservatory's upmost window," the white elephant trunked over to her a cocoanut plucked at that height. "Hard to hold it, laughing," said the giraffe through her pearly teeth.

And as fortunes also sometimes come not singly—hearken! The doorbell suddenly rang —rang all into silence.

Where was Alec? What possessed the cuckoo-clock that it struck three o'clock, when it really was three o'clock in the afternoon!

"Alec! Alec!" called Lady Jane.

So profound the silence that the bullfinch's song was heard:

"Enjoy, O enjoy life,
So long as lasts its little flame——"

Montrose pulled the wire.

"Didn't I tell you!" flowed slowly forth from the depth of the mother's heart.

This time no dissenting voice. And while in the embrace of Theo—of Theo, her beloved son—she had nothing, nothing for him but tears of joy.

"I am happy to see you so well, mother! and these pretty purple ribbons, too," he said quite tenderly; and nought dismayed by the jolly combinations around him, the matter-of-fact man merely addressed to the assemblage the greeting: "I'm happy that you all are so very happy."

His mother still clinging to him, he, somewhat disconcerted, asked her not to be too hard on him, and continued: "Not again will I leave you, mother. I have seen enough of the world, and shall devote my life to you, and perhaps to a book brimful of my experiences as an explorer."

Caressing Rosette, who (wanting to love whomever her benefactress loved) held his hand, Theo unburdened his heart to the mother in these words: "This rosy maiden——"

"Little Rosette come back to me," said Eliza.

"—would be a nice companion," he continued, "to a little East Indian girl, the daughter of a widow, whom, as dutiful son, I would not marry without your consent. She is refined, very social, fond of keeping open house, and of serving many courses at table——"

"Would you mind?" asked mother the aunt.

"Not a bit." This with delight.

The expression of his mother's dear eye told to Theo her assent.

A happy family was this!

That from fear of his master or the tiger, Alec had disappeared, did not matter, because Theo had brought with him a servant both faithful and efficient.

"I'm glad he has a purse," said Jane to herself, Alec in mind.

In joyous expectation of a new playmate, Rosette looked for Rose in order to discuss attendant possibilities.

The kangaroo, the lion, rhinoceros; the monkey, tiger, camel, gnu and all the other animals, except only the lamb, she perceived to have been ushered back into their cages; saw the lamb happy on the grass; saw gardener and servants. In vain she searched for Rose.

That, prompted by unconquerable desire for land and sea, Rose and Montrose had sought the open—seemed after all, so natural!

Rosette repeated to herself her consolation to the melancholy wren, that there are other summers.

By good Dame Nature Jane and Eliza were inspired to utter lightly:

"Wild Roses will be Wild Roses."

EMBODIMENT OF FRAGRANCY.

CHRISTMAS-STORY, NARRATIVE OF ADVENTURES,
AND FAIRY TALE.

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EMBODIMENT OF FRAGRANCY.

I.

CHRISTMAS BOXES.

No doubt every family has traits of its own, and the trait of the Sternborn's was to give presents to Agnes and Felix, aged nine years and seven respectively, but once a year—at Christmas, of course. While the neighboring Bob and Joe received on birthdays, for instance, a piece of gingerbread and even a picture, the parents Sternborn celebrated such holidays by demonstrative congratulations, by embracing and kissing the birthday child; but so great is sometimes the obduracy of the little ones at home, that on last birthday, when his father looked love to him with moistened eye, Felix expressed regrets at not having Bob's pa for father; yea, went so far as to say that he

preferred gingerbread to affection. Gentle father, however, pressed the boy to his heart, and spoke of Renunciation as sister to Economy, hence virtue's disciplinarian.

No wonder, then, that on the approaching Christmas eve their nursery looked utterly forlorn with its doll like a mummy, its rocking horse like a lame Rozinante. But what a change when, as if by magic of the bells that sounded, the folding doors flew open, and hundred lights of the laden tree illuminated all the splendors, which where gifts extraordinary, such as a jointed doll that could talk, a Zoetrope raining pitchforks; and when the well-combed donkey, who as yet had only opened and closed his eyes, turned out to be a real, live donkey, and, the boy on his back, made the circuit of the presenting tables, merriment was at its highest.

With something of everything, books were not wanting; they, however, reflecting the father's much-vaunted method of education, based on sternest realism, would not have ap-

pealed to the still absent uncle's taste. But what exception could his sister Thusnelda—mother of the children—take to "Fox's Martyrs" for Agnes, "Bloody Wars and Conquests" for Felix, since she was probably converted to her husband's faith, as every good housewife is supposed to be.

Uncle's absence could not be explained until the last candlelight shone on his telegram:

"To Ernest Sternborn:
Delayed by no less personage than Santa Claus himself. Timothy Tiddles."

A reconciling message, and pleasant, too, in that it promised renewed pleasure for to-morrow.

II.

PROMISES.

To live through a long night of expectancy is not so easy a matter as the simple turning of this leaf which introduces the kind reader to Uncle Timothy, the welcome guest at Sternborn Hall. To state that he looked very like his friend Santa Claus gives a minute description, if one except the eye, inasmuch as uncle's expressed more dreaminess than discrimination; and after some mysterious hammering in the nursery, where he had busied himself for quite a while, he there received his relatives, somewhat ceremoniously; for he was to be the lion for the next half hour in which he would enhance his reputation as an entertaining story-teller.

Before ascending the newly erected platform,

he was entreated by the children to admit Bob and Joe to the amusement; but Timothy objected on the plea that interruption during the performance might break the charm, and a larger audience than of four could not keep silent. After the four had been vowed to silence, which promise Timothy insisted upon being strengthened by a kiss from each one, the children reminded uncle of their habit to rise in school when impulse seized them, at least when they believed they knew a thing or two.

"Arise, but hold your little tongue; and let me add that any question proposed in a story is to be answered by the teller alone!" said the amused uncle, leaving parents and children seated before an improvised curtain.

III.

A SPEECH.

A SLIGHT tick, and the rising curtain admitted to view the counterpart of Santa Claus, with his congenial smile and a pea-jacket, the pockets of which projected a good deal—from a heavy fur glove in each, maybe. He said:

" 'With an eye for beauty you need not take the trouble to ascend the Sierras, but may obtain satisfaction in the city park,' said I to myself when there standing in front of a basin filled with choice plants in bloom. After having imbibed their honey an oriole sipped the liquid crystal; other objects favorable to entrancement gathered about when the harsh, 'Old clothes, sir?' broke upon me.

" 'I, for my part, wear only shining raiments,' said I, indignantly.

" 'Indeed, sir!' persisted the peddler, 'there is a sartin shine about them that brings them exactly within my line.'

"My farewell salutation, intended for only him, drove birds and gathering nymphs away; it had been so emphatic that the sparkling fishes sought shelter under the circular emerald leaves; that lotos and lilies, after having stopped up their ears, closed altogether. The spell was broken.

"This illustration of curse following interruption I bring before you, brethren and nieces, because I have not full faith in your recent promises; and in order to impress you still deeper, I should like it to be understood, that each interrupter forfeit a Christmas present in case such were in store for her or him."

This much-applauded speech concluded the scene in the narrow antechamber.

IV.

AN ORIGINAL STAGE.

ANOTHER *cliquetis*, and the eye rested on strangely pointed growths reminding of aloes, hemlocks and the like, but upon the whole, indiscernible by the uncertain light. It was not long, however, ere a soft greenish lustre illumed their bursting into bloom; and while this tropical garden spread out, a balmy redolence, as from the many flowers in the midst of palmetto trees, pervaded the nursery. Like one of those pictures which by simple contrivance develop standing scenery, this paper flora had been produced; and in order not to impair the illusion, the inventor kept seated on some elevation behind luxuriant shrubbery in a manner that scarcely his forefinger or a slate-pencil could be seen; nor was it perceptible whether he recited from memory or read:

V.

A FAIRY TALE.

DISINCLINED to superlatives, I yet feel duty bound to declare the tale, now unfolding, the most exquisitely beautiful one in existence. Not that it treats of fairies alone—for Ethelberta and Victor were as tangible a little girl and a little boy with ruddy cheeks and good stout limbs as might be found in the town where they lived among pleasant associations, not the least of which were a pleasant mamma and papa. Of indoor diversions there were many; and the garden was large enough to hold, besides an arbor, a flower bed for each one of the children. However, little attention was bestowed to these luxuries in the city. The flowers, transplanted from winter quarters to the narrow beds, were no longer a novelty to Victor and Ethelberta; and to watch a few

seeds growing up they considered not worth the while—for the awakening of spring in its unboundedness was to be celebrated in their country seat, whereto their minds began to wander. And yet, departure seemed a long way off, when reflecting that ere then considerable time was to elapse even after Ethelberta's birthday. No matter what garment of patience the little ones exerted themselves to put on, that birthday seemed never, never to come. At the bottom of all that pleasant flutter of impatience was the sure expectancy of— Well, is a birthday present not the finest thing on earth?

Up started, as if by agreement, both Felix and Agnes; but as quickly lifted the uncle his warning finger, and the deserted seats were retaken.

What then contained the ribbon-and-catnip-trimmed basket which father presented to Ethelberta? What, forth from its half-opened cover, said Miau, miau?

Instantly both children, again on their feet,

were motioned down, while the shrubbery appeared to shake from laughter.

A Maltese kitten of four short weeks' duration.

"For no silk, no gold, no diadem; for nothing in the world would I surrender this lovely, lovely kitten!" exclaimed Ethelberta. "Poor thing, in tender babyhood abandoned by parents! Mother and sister will I be to it; it is so pretty!" But kitten was not in the least concerned about bereavements of any kind; which contentment, ascribed to predilection for its owner, endeared it so much the more. It became the pet of the household.

One morning Victor bethought himself of a joke, stood behind mother, and holding a soft, gray-haired sample toward her cheek, asked: "Where is dear little kitten?" whereupon she, deceived, stroked the sample tenderly, to the amusement of all at table. And this playful deception was frequently repeated; mother, pretending not to know better, aware that, even as one must always smile to a smiling baby, she should humor every little joke of a child.

The small garden now became the kitten's garden, and school lessons were worked out in the arbor, because the clever climbing gave enjoyment to both, children and performer—little Maltese she was called, or simply "Maltese."

As Maltese was always under the eye of the boisterous playmates, not a cat dared even appear on the high fence. What ebullition, what whirlwind, therefore, when at first meal in the country home, suddenly, from each of the dining-room's corners, emerged a jealous jet-black cat (the janitor's own) in hostile demonstration against Maltese! Suppose you had never seen one of those black porcelain dolls, and all at once laid eyes on four of them, one in each corner, would you not flee into your mother's wardrobe?

Up flew the children; calmed down; again shook the secreting shrubbery.

Maltese fled into Ethelberta's bureau drawer, where, couched on a lavender cushion, it with reluctance took the anxiously offered food for

three days and nights—then disappeared, to the unutterable dismay of all concerned.

After having (according to his own statement) reshipped the four black cats to Africa, the janitor proved the family's and little Maltese's friend by indefatigable search for the "demented kitten," as he termed her. Not an hour during the day without endearing calls; deeply into the night they rang, next day they extended to the neighboring farmers, and still farther.

Something was wanting in all plays of the children. For their happiness, springtime was not what it should be. Were verdure ever so fresh, spring's flowers were they ever so gay, some gray spot was wanting.

Eating, they wondered, if kitten found food; during rain, if she were protected.

One fine morning Victor appeared in India-rubber boots. After a few words with him, his father was heard saying: "In slippers you are just as much of a man; put on your slippers!" and, light-footed, the boy started for a

far, prominent point on the opposite hill that commanded an extensive view. At moonrise he returned entirely dejected; and, after conversation with his sister, one could perceive that the old sorrow still hung upon them.

At this stage the narrator rejoices over being inspired to say—and begs the hearers to inscribe in their heart the truth—that sorrow is not meant to last.

A few more days, a few more nights of worry, and, brave children of brave parents, Victor and Ethelberta summon Castor and Pollux out of their kennels. These St. Bernards shared the qualities of their namesakes in that they were, in the words of history, heroes united by affection, inseparable in enterprise. The cavalier's and cavaliera's size and age may be determined when told that their weight just suited those giant dogs.

Away they tore, the riders appropriately clothed in costumes heretofore worn by them in theatricals, now in real life.

With a variety of feelings—father citing

healthful influences derived from the school of life; mother already enjoying the prospect of her children's tale—the parents watched them through a spyglass until they disappeared behind the point visited by Victor some days ago.

There the boy had perceived, beyond intervening valleys and lower hills, on top of a plateau some structure which, then painted golden by the evening sun, fascinated him again in broad day's entrancing light. In that direction they bent their course. It proved indeed to be no ordinary edifice—an observatory, where stars were plenty, but was, alas! observed no kitten.

So on they rode, and when the shades began to lengthen reached

VI.

A HERMITAGE.

"WELL, well! Good-evening, children!" said quite a small man, grown small by weight of years, and thin by scanty diet; indeed, most of him was a mind of his own. "You remind me," he continued—"it takes a long time to remember eighty years back."

"Have you seen our Maltese kitten?"

"And so you came," answered Albin, the hermit, "to slay the dragon—dragons, exterminated last century, are a good way off. So you just take these fruits and this spring water, and pass the night on these oak-branch cots."

"Thank you. Is there in your hut a small gray cat?"

"Not that I know. Ask my bird."

Wistfully gazed the bird, the richness of whose plumage made him appear above medium size, at the questioning children; then, turning sadly away, sang melodiously in its open cage:

"Lost, lost, lost!
Trails diverging
May seas be surging
'Tween fragrancy and South."

"Have you found the kitten?" asked the hermit.

"We could not understand the bird."

"Well, wait; refreshing sleep may strengthen your wits and his. A man of ninety, like myself, is always wide awake."

So they slept well on their little cots, undisturbed by Albin's prayers throughout the night; nor suffered safely caved Castor and Pollux from the rain that fell as a blessing not to nature only—But I must not again forestall.

Awaking early and hearing him mumble, "Have you prayed that we may find our

L. of C.

kitten?" asked the children Albin, who, caressed by the sun, sat on the outside bench.

"Ask the bird," said the hermit; and the bird sang his song.

"What says the bird to your hearing?" asked Albin.

"Lost, lost, lost!
Trails diverging
May seas be surging
'Tween fragrancy and South,"

answered Ethelberta.

"To mine ears, aged one hundred, he sings:

Viz., viz., viz.,
To wit, to wit, to wit—

which surely means:

Viz., viz., to wit,
Wanting wit,
Away to whiz."

"Where is fragrancy?" asked Victor.

"What is the use of thinking about that at my ripe age of one hundred and twenty. Let the dogs ask the bird; they may find the scent."

And to them the bird sang his song, which heard, they gave an impatient bark; and the children, mounted, had scarcely time to seize the offered berries—so impetuous was the motion of the dogs. At full speed they took an apparently unwavering course. Lost on Victor, with sword at his side, on Ethelberta, with escutcheon across her breast, was the hermit's call: "Visit me again! Good luck for your fight with the dragon!"

VII.

FRAGRANCY.

THE aspect of the country now changed in that, from the wooded hills through which they passed, a view opened upon long calcareous (at least chalky) stretches. These must be traversed before fairer land could be reached. Pervaded as with the spirits of his bearer, Victor uttered that he would pursue the search to the end of the world.

Ah, little fellow! but where is the end of a globe? And are you aware that, even if the fourteen hundred and fifty million inhabitants of this rotund earth tendered their services to your highness, still many a retreat on its fifty-four million square miles would be left undiscovered? Instead of hastening, rather invoke a kind constellation, or trust in the habit of

mother to pray for her son. A touch of solemnity in Timothy's voice indicated his entering into the heart of the story.

As one unconsciously passes thousands of objects protected by Nature—owls and treetoads among them—thus she conceals many a garden for uses of her own. Like birds of passage a couple of twin fairies had drifted into one of those exquisite reservations of Nature who, perchance for the sake of their blindness, wanted to nurse them as her children. The encompassing rocks, in addition to hiding that spacious dominion, retained within it the exhalations of flowers which thrived there in profusion, each species in clusters. This manifold fragrancy constituted the life of the sisters. Deprived of eyesight, as they were, their sense for perfumes had become so refined that through them they inhaled the pleasures and griefs of existence; or yet: Full exercise of each particular emotion of theirs was dependent upon a particular fragrancy; and also we, although not thus gifted and afflicted, are sufficiently subject to

emotions and versed in fragrancies to at least imagine associations between the two such as existed in the mind of these our new friends. So, if inclined for sport, they chose—whose fragrance would you think?

What flowers of color gay,
By them unseen,
To sense of ours betray
Inspiriting force unseen?
For playing-rink
They chose the province of the pink.

Their dances over, they resorted to

Quintessence of perfection,
Perfume, engendering
Peace, and tendering
Slumber on down i' the section
For repose—
Hail to thee, Queen of queens, O Rose!

"Abominably fanciful!" here escaped the lips of Ernest Sternborn.

"Entirely natural alliterations," gently rebuked Timothy; and the rebuked might have

traced the lines of 'Present forfeited,' so audibly moved pencil over slate.

So sensitive, continued imperturbed the narrator, were the blind to touch that in their careful flight they were never harmed by thorn or thistle.

Nobody can call Dame Nature cold or unmerciful!

Into this balmy retreat she guided another soul that appealed to her loving tendance, although this gray being only whispered miau. Before having found her way into the garden of the fairies, the demented Maltese had passed under a burning sun through dry, white regions as trying to the eye as blinding snowfields. However, the universe being erected on the plan that help of some kind be ever within reach of the worthy, the kitten felt herself led to a spring near the entrance of this paradise. To dive her six-toed paw into it and to moisten her blue eyes with the water were actions of a moment, and as quickly she perceived her little self reflected, the encircling palm trees, and

even far off, over flowers, the twin fairies. "Only a catbird!" they sighed, and searched for the abode of

GRIEF

Geranium-scented,
Based on belief
That, the lamented
In for half share,
Through gravitation
Separation
End here or there.

To that grove followed Maltese, and, although not quite her own self, she managed to assert herself as a companionable kitten. More endeared, there was apportioned to her the fragrance of catnip, of course, the happiest selection which could have been made. Weak as was her intellect in one direction, so much the stronger in another; indeed, thanks to kindly compensation, so strong that one fair day—fair they were mostly there—kitten knew enough to draw her friends from their pink play-rink to

the adjacent well. Deeply she dipped the velvet paws into the liquid, gently clomb upon her friends, and with the tenderness of a mother she touched the eyes of the fairies. Beneficent seemed to be that humid touch. Seated near them at the spring, Maltese sagaciously observed the enlivening pupils—the overwhelmed amazement.

"How beautiful thou art!"
"And thou, how beautiful!"

sobbed sister to sister, while they embraced each other.

"Beautiful!" exclaimed in ecstasy Thusnelda, *née* Tiddles; and Justice being no regarder of dimples and graces, the white mark of forfeiture became attached to Mrs. Sternborn's name.

And when, resumed her brother, in enraptured bewilderment their glances wandered over the superb display of colors, over the vast area covered with flowers, shrubs and trees, words failed them, but not tears to express unbounded admiration.

"Here must also I," said Timothy, with faltering voice, "observe silence for a while." Nor could by the sobs of their father the children's eager attention be diverted from the flowerage before them of paper, yet sufficient for them to feel: What a blessing that also we can see.

Emotion overcome, solemn delivery took its course. What inspiration in store for the new seers when night would disclose the magnificence of the heavens!

The beds of brilliant fragrancy-dispensers; the elevations presenting them to perfection; the effect of the blending of colors within the grand frame of gem-dotted rocks; above all, the firmament: All these sublimities, absorbed with rapture, were now of no moment to their young benefactress who solely watched for a glance from their eyes. When these at last rested upon her, both sisters were impelled to call a kitten one of the loveliest creations; and her ways of rubbing against them, curving her back as if too pleased with them, scampering

off, yet returning for renewed caress, brought her often toward rose-lips.

Promenading through the garden, they regarded with growing amazement beetles and berries, foliage and flowers. From them their gaze would gratefully revert to the kitten; and bethinking themselves of love due to her, they, as of old, closed their eyes in order to gain the scent to

> The love-incender
> Lavender:
> Intense as warmth of summer,
> As love that summer unfolds—
> Intense as love it embodies,
> Is fragrance this flower-bed holds.

Before this cluster stood little Maltese like one charmed, in an instant inhalation of its perfume recalled to her the lavender cushion in the drawer, all attendant circumstances: and—happy to relate—effected was kitten's cure, and a purr was added to her charms. Oh, how she then longed for her mistress! Oh, how for Victor and their home!

A note of energy now forced through some fissure its way into the garden; a note not at all disconcerting nor fairies, nor her—for sensitive creatures know friendship's bark. And when, at full gallop, the travelers had reached them, there was joy in Paradise.

No balm needed children and dogs for eyesight; night rain had softened the white stones' glare; and after both parties had smilingly scrutinized each other, the fairies declared human beings for the more admirable of the two.

"In this instance, fairy ladies!" said the cavalier, "you err."

On their tour among blossoms and fancy grasses, fairies and children opened their hearts to each other; and with the words of their friends came the time of wonderment for the children. After the former had described the embodiments of fragrancy vouchsafed to their spiritual eye—"embodiments delicate, and, to this our second sight, not unlike the forms of hope, or love, or joy, beaming from your

human eye"—the childen could not enough wonder that sentiments should have been formed or yet fostered by fragrance; sensations of rising and falling, waving and waltzing, by apparently motionless blossoms. However, as soon as the fairies had learned from what a fascinating form emanated each fragrance, Fragrancy language became intelligible to all.

Sadly the sisters turned to the geranium leaf, which, they sighed, had been resorted to for grief over the loss of a dearly beloved bird. Far back as they could remember he had been their associate whose every mood they had learned to esteem. "Most we delighted in his songs when carried to us on a certain stratum of air:

The heliotrope
Much sweetness granted,
Yet more was wanted—
A something undefined,
Her breath stirred hope.

There his song also conveyed to us a great

promise, now so happily fulfilled by manifestation of the glories befcre us. When in our former odoriferous retreat, a flight of birds seemed to pass us seeking some warmer spring. Our friend is believed to have joined them; impulse subsiding he may have turned; but in absence of a guiding trail again have pursued his flight to the South." Here, blessing the training that his memory owed to school, Victor's voice softened into accents of the bird in the hermitage:

"Lost, lost, lost!
Trails diverging
May seas be surging
'Tween fragrancy and South."

After which the fairies sang:

"And so he staid North forlorn;"

and, used to surprises, they eagerly asked if Victor were the bird metamorphosed? The truth soon told, there was a new outbreak of rejoicing; the kitten again jumped over and upon the dogs—the most famous ride on record

—and in spite of their long journey the St. Bernards behaved as friskily as kittens. And such effusions of thanksgivings! Everybody thanked everybody, and their demonstrations in these vital matters naturally merged into a little hymn of thanks to good Dame Nature.

The journey back to the hermitage was like a flying triumphal procession.

"Well, well," said our friend, the hermit, "how things have changed! In my early years dragons" (this at Maltese) "were larger, and, as I think of it, of different shape altogether; and, bless my soul, if I ever laid eyes" (this at the fairies) "on such butterflies!" And he shook helmet and flag of the children, wings of the fairies, and paws of the rest.

With reverence looked kitten at the bird.

When bird and fairies gained sight of each other the sisters could move no further—such was their emotion, such their astonishment at the brilliancy of his varicolored plumage. Thus, with folded hands they stood. But the bird left the cage into which he had banished

himself after all vain attempts to find the playmates; and tenderly nestling to their garlanded faces, he sang:

"Found, O found!
Nothing ever
Again us sever—
Not e'en the fragrant North."

"Thou shalt not die for us, beautiful bird!" said the fairies. "Whithersoever thou hoppest, thithersoever we will hop."

At this outburst of overflowing feelings the whole family Sternborn, only too glad to find an outlet for their emotion, burst into roars of laughter.

"And whither thou fliest we will fly."

"Then let us migrate to the milder South!"

"To the far, fragrant South!"

Taking leave of dogs and kitten, their winged friends said:

"Farewell, sweet quadrupeds with four legs."

Renewed peals of laughter filled the nursery,

and repetition of the sentence was solicited by Thusnelda and Ernest. But Timothy Tiddles insisted with as much firmness as a laughing voice can command, that better things were coming.

Said the fairies in kissing the children:

"Farewell, sweet bipeds on two feet."

If roars had followed former utterances, what should be said of the well-sustained uproar after this last greeting?

"Too, too good!" shouted Sternborn. Nothing more had he to forfeit; and while through furrows, formed by hilarity, tears rolled into mutton-chop whiskers, he went on to say: "The fairies must have been in a humorous vein that afternoon," which effusion forced also Timothy into hearty laughter.

A sharp tick on the slate restored attention to the narrative.

"Farewell! In other springs we meet again."

By their flight high in the air the hermit was moved to sing:

'Viz., viz.,
To wit, to wit, to wit;
Birdie found at last his wit."

Out of his cavernous coach-house he rolled a small conveyance, whereto were harnessed Castor and Pollux.

Victor and Ethelberta yet pointed out to Albin, who had not quitted these quarters for many a year, some not distant grounds which they had noticed to be far more sheltered, as also to offer more fuel and fruit.

"Well, well," said the hermit before his guests were out of sight; "to think of the use made of that rickety wagon in which I wheeled my blessed children two hundred years ago;" and cheerfully he turned his steps toward the new domain.

VIII.

FINIS CORONAT OPUS.

THE observatory passed, the equipage could not move over many prominences unwatched by the travelers' parents. Seldom perhaps a spyglass did better service than on that occasion. "I am confident that my hopes will be realized!" exclaimed the joyous father. "My prayers heard, I anticipate much joy from the tale of their adventures!" were the jubilant words of the mother. And when at length sounds the post horn, and smacks the whip, and bark the dogs, and mews the kitten, the story-teller can hardly be heard when saying that he is pleased that you, dear friends, are pleased with such a joyful, such a glorious ending.

IX.

THE TRUE ISSUE.

AMID deafening applause Uncle Timothy stepped from the platform, griped deeply into his peajacket pockets, and with tenderness handed to each one of the expectant children a tiny Maltese kitten.

"Betsey," he said to the receiving Agnes; "and Sammie," to Felix, who, like his sister, jumped for delight.

"Right were the fairies," exclaimed both, "in naming a kitten a most precious treasure."

"Direct descendants from the Maltese of my story," added uncle, by way of explanation.

"These are not demented?"

"Intelligent pets they were to put in their word just at the right times during the story," jested the mother.

"Pose a kindly black cat in front of them, and they will be all right," was the uncle's proposition, approved by the kittens; at least a quick double miau of each was thus interpreted by the children.

"Idiosyncrasies (which sometimes means sublime endowments) do not descend to animals so much as to man; and since Ethelberta and Victor are nobody else, dear children, than my mother and my father, I, Timothy, your uncle, am a genius of high degree, which I trust the rendering of my tale to have fully confirmed."

"Fully!" was the general ejaculation.

"No less," urged Tiddles, improving his victory, "is to be appreciated its intrinsic value, replete as it is with delightful touches of geography, history, arithmetic, and with such entomological-ethical tendencies which make a fairy tale simply educational. And which was your favorite part, little girl?"

"Some parts," answered Agnes, "I did not quite understand; but each mention of fairies made my heartlet perfectly happy."

"No use," began to speak the father—"no use combating harmless, inborn disposition. The secret out, I am ready to change my method of education."

"For what length of time?" meekly asked Agnes.

"Why not until they are of age?" ventured to interpose Thusnelda.

"Thus be it!" answered Ernest Sternborn; and descrying "Fox's Martyrs," and "Bloody Wars and Conquests," he hinted that he would as lief retain these in his premises till then.

"This fault is easily remedied," laughed Timothy, while again relieving his pockets, this time of the ponderous volumes "Fairy Tales of all Nations" for Agnes, "Fables of all Times and Places" for Felix.

Perception of children, dear little souls! is keen. Her poor kitten asked for a velvet collar, interlaced with gold. Would not papa give one to Agnes on next birthday?

"Rather would I give birthday presents to you for yourself," advanced the reformed

father. Felix instantly brought this concession home to himself, and each child grasped one of papa's hands. Mother, hastening to take each free hand of theirs, it so happened that the four formed a closed circle round Timothy, as yet, like his brother-in-law, unconscious of the performance. "However erratic my method may have been," debated the latter with great animation, "I rejoice never to have used the rod, having substituted for the scriptural rod my by far happier, and doubtless more correct translation, Advice (in German Rat), 'Spare advice and spoil the child.'"

"Well, well," interrupted Timothy (somewhat in the tones of the hermit), beginning to realize his precarious position; "in due season we will work out for you a new method of education. Now let us yield to the pleasures of the Christmas festival!" And after a short pause, possibly in order to regain liberty, he said to the children: "Now call in your friends of all names whatsoever, and tell them that, although not quite five hundred years old, like

hermit Albin, this Santa Claus has about so many peajacket pockets filled for good children, and particularly for good listeners." The last words were uttered already beyond reach of the children, with a feigned reproachful glance at Mr. and Mrs. Sternborn, while to them tendering his empty hands. But, oh, how much a warm pressure of the hand contains!

ALLOTTED FOR EACH OTHER;

OR,

A MODERN PARADISE.

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ALLOTTED FOR EACH OTHER.

I.

A DREAM.

SUCH there be and should always be, who, finding themselves bearers of an illustrious name, endeavor to gratify their parents' fond vanity by living up to at least one cardinal virtue of the celebrity after whom they were named. Let one, so unfortunate as to be christened George Washington, but never tell a lie, and those around him, as certainly as himself, will be the better for it.

Like him of the Madonnas, the young Raphael of this true tale devoted himself to palette and brush; but his productions were too flighty, too multifarious to make him great —flowers he painted, animals, landscapes,

sometimes strikingly, often eliciting decided preference for the originals: "What," had his parents said, "does that matter to him, the possessor of an independent fortune?"

This leads to the mention of a genuine affinity of his with the renowned namesake—an affinity (developed but after the untimely, deplorable demise of his parents) in the surprising direction that he bestowed upon each woman the veneration due to a Madonna, a praiseworthy and imitable homage, to be sure.

Himself he held so deeply beneath the lowliest of the fair, that the thought of a *marital* union lay as remote from him as that of accosting an unapproachable deity.

However, dreams come unawares; and one of those which are prophecies guided him to a maiden whom (how suddenly are changes wrought through love!) he forthwith vowed to win. Black had been the attire lightly inclosing her lithe form; the shortness of her black hair, just touching neck and shoulders—a bar to beauty, perchance, with others—seemed to

enhance the beauty of her features; but the charm, that held young Raphael captive, was the ingenuousness speaking out of her eyes, together with the unaffected cordiality wherewith she had welcomed him in the dream.

Her, therefore, he must make his own at whatever cost; and as the surroundings, illumined by her presence, had evidently been enchanted, his first steps must be directed toward the haunted woods across the river. Night, to be sure, was yawning. But what of grewsome night, if it reveal the precious jewel!

II.

HAUNTED GROUNDS.

THE river's aspect surely was forbidding. A forsaken rowboat, easily detached, proved as efficient as desired. At that hour no other oarsman would have ventured upon those waters, which were not long ere manifesting their connection with the haunted grounds. The rower's eagerness, however, had no time for timidity. With satisfaction he perceived his passage quickened; to others was then left the care of the helm. Readily he counted them as part of the adorable "woman-soul"; and touching land he exclaimed: "Thanks for your services, sweet nymphs! I am your friend."

From a previously studied chart, joined to a volume entitled "Legends Old and New," the solitary wanderer inferred that but one spot in

those regions might be available for his purpose—one in their very heart, since no other clearing was marked as sufficiently spacious for the palatial structure connected with his dream-image. To reach that recess many a ravine had to be passed in the darkness, many an entanglement to be overcome with limbs and cane. Such retarding impediments were invariably followed by increased speed; and the sound of his hurried steps, multiplied by echoes, became strangely mingled with low notes, the origin of which remained a mystery.

The sketched clearing was no myth. In the dim starlight were spread out before him sturdy trees or sometimes less definable objects encircling the space filled with luxuriant grasses and flowers—instead of the longed-for romantic edifice.

Hence another train of thought must be pursued; and our knapsacked pilgrim prayed for inspiration, or rather tried to pray, while his disappointment fostered feelings at variance with edification, among them the growing sus-

picion, in part loudly expressed (while the sounds of his voice, vibrating as if sportive spirits played ball with them, belied his argument), that the reputation of the forest was a fraud.

But things remarkable are rare and take their time in coming.

"Discouragement retards," he thought; and on he sped from wooded path to mossy rock, where motions more discreet were bidden. Anon a height was reached, along which there extended a spacious level way bordered by perpendicular rocks, while the forest underneath was buried in blackness.

With a sigh he felt energy succumb to fatigue; and, seated on a rock, his gaze wandered from the inscrutable dark to the wall in front, castellated and seemingly covered with scenes of the Middle Ages. Only for a moment did these rouse the artistic sense of Raphael; for even if warlike pictures had been congenial to him, the true import of these was not discernible in the uncertain starlight, excepting

perchance a gigantic warrior designed and glittering on the directly opposite rock part. Unconsciously the artist had assumed a reclining position, and sleep surprised him on the mossy couch under a laurel bush.

Sleep of questionable length—sleep shaken off as violently as it had softly come.

Raphael stood erect. In art imagination had helped him out; but here facts surpassed his wildest fancies. Erect, like himself, still stood the wall in front. Was it part of a fortification of the Powers of the Dark? Had they let loose the terrors of an all-annihilating cannonade? No flash, no smoke. No loophole in the solid rock.

Or had a thunderous tempest burst forth? Under the still quietly shining stars?

Then surely volcanic forces are at play, eruption fraught. Or yet will an earthquake thrust all into the gloom below? Already bowlders upon bowlders rolled into the unfathomable deep; already nearer raged the fury of the elements.

"Not fury, startled traveler," might a quieting voice have whispered; "nor of elements. As yet proceedings in this adventurous night take an ordinary course." Unnatural but the all too sudden transition from stillness to the violent movements of a powerfully built, splendid snow-white horse, who, having espied a human being in this solitude, had galloped toward him over trunk and bowlder.

Raphael, not long in recognizing the animal's overjoyance, repaid its endearments to the fullest.

This proof of the unerring instinct of animals reminded him of a dove which once had flown out of a wilderness into his, a lonely wanderer's arms.

Before having assured himself whether the white mare were in any wise enchanted, he had asked her if a stately mansion existed, on these grounds, and she could carry him to the maiden in black; whereupon the horse had shaken the mane that reached below her broad chest.

Perfect understanding established between the two, the animal stayed near by, content; while man once more bespoke repose, by this time convinced that his former sleep had been oblivion of a moment—so unbroken yet the deep of the night.

"Beautiful companion," he still said; "comforter more substantial than mere whistling in the dark."

No repose, however, seemed vouchsafed to him; yea, unspeakable was his astonishment, his dismay, when the portrayal of the gigantic warrior broke, with a crash, loose from the opposite rock-wall; when this giant in person lowered the visor, through which sparkled uncanny eyes; struck with resounding vigor the flat of his weapon against the shield; brandished the sword, thereby forcing shrieks of woe from the rent air. A step forward, and he challenged to mortal combat him who had invaded and calumniated his territory.

The mare, upon her trembling haunches, ears thrown back, nostrils distended, never deserted her new friend.

The artist's sensitive nerves displayed a similar activity at this critical period of his existence. Through his mind flashed the conviction that, by the shaking of her long, long tail (or was it mane?) the mare had conclusively indicated that his business in the woods was settled.

Tempestuously as had roared the expectant giant, so softly followed the enticing cooing of Raphael's befriended dove, perched on a higher rock which, on the right, revealed to quickened senses a curve in the wall, available mayhap for rapid ascension.

Palette and brush, or yet pilgrim staff and knapsack, were they expected to cope with weapons sprung from rock?

Forth from the mystic circle
Come, come to me,
To me—

such meaning seemed the cooing to convey. The artist bethought himself of the comfort at the bosom of sweet safety; and with a celer-

ity that would surely be envied by a hotly pursued buck, he turned toward, and clambered up the adjacent rock with apparently natural accommodations for ascent.

III.

THE ROSE GARDEN AND CAVE OF FAITH.

ARRIVED above, one glance revealed a country of many possibilities, yet enchantment free. The valley lay at a great distance. To measure distance or indulge in other contemplations was just then out of question.

The successful climber now tried his skill in swiftfootedness; pursued the downward course until the stimulus was spent; then laid down to sleep, sleep sweet, dreamless and refreshing, under the protecting stars.

The first faint light of day removed his slumber. As far as reached his glance, down the grand slanting hill and up again to the opposite ridge, he could discern but one species of vegetation—the most sublime to his intuition—rosebushes, all planted in equal nearness to

each other. Velvety green incasing the luscious, fragrant blossom, suggested the moss-rose. Even thornless were these roses, whereof he, erstwhile bedded upon them, must have been an indisputable judge. Raphael would not stop to analyze, partly because, from habit, he only searched for art objects on business tours (as otherwise he could enjoy nor object, nor scenery); chiefly, however, he now hurried through the rose garden, fearing not diminution of mutual love—for that could never be!—but interference of disturbing circumstances through loss of time.

The roses left behind, he passed, ere yet the sun had fairly risen, by the brink of an extensive natural excavation, so bright in scintillating whiteness, so brilliant like phosphorescence, that he could not resist to descend, there to espy a multitude of caves with wide openings of equal lucidity; a white altar visible in each.

Entering one of these shrines he found suspended on its altar a tablet on which was engraven in diamantine letters the single word,

"Faith." This word he took to heart, cared not for the worldly treasures which the caves might hold, and moved on with cane and knapsack and with faith.

IV.

THE MEETING AND ITS CONSEQUENCES.

"Where roses bloom
There sometimes blooms a maiden."

WITH this effusion the artist had transcended into poetry, a form so favored by lovers, chiefly the lovesick.

She at the garlanded porch of a farmhouse was, alas! not her with the black robe, the short black hair, the Roman nose. This latter thought scarcely framed, he recognized in it the fervently desired inspiration, genuine beyond a doubt. Joyfully he repeated to himself: The Roman nose! and forthwith asked for the way to Rome. Mindful, however, that while believing he had swerved from the direct course, he had found the inspiration through the by-path to the shrine, he henceforth sped with more circumspection.

At length the scenery adopted the peculiar Italian character; yea, became Italy itself, of fascination so well known through pictures and books, if not through enviable experience.

The end of another of many days drew near. Before, however, counting also that day as lost, he undertook a moonlight stroll, well noting the situation of the village inn.

High trees formed the alley from whose graveled sidewalk he viewed a succession of rich residences, erected in luxurious gardens, each one of which would yield a painting of individual charm, with orange flavor.

Anon another estate revealed itself; larger than its neighbors; bordered by sturdy, low cypresses.

The wanderer quickened his steps. His heartbeats quickened. Certainty was gained when, at the portal, the remote palace, on both sides adorned by high, superb cypresses, presented itself to his excited gaze.

Gloomy seem both, palace and cypresses;
Lovelier ne'er was gloom—
Kindly moon! shift but thy silvery tresses,
Shifting gloom to bloom.

Thus Raphael—painter, poet, lover.

Beset by a thousand thoughts he directed, amid shrubs and statues, his steps toward the edifice.

"Is the moon tired of good rhymes?" he reflected. "Who knows her silvery moods! The gloom, far from shifting, ever expands. Nay, I surely wrong the kindly moon. Shines not that white marble column e'er so brilliantly? The figure, whose elbow rests on it, cannot but be draped in black." Such his tumultuous thoughts. "Is it a statue?" he still tremblingly asked himself.

Anon the figure turned its delicately featured face, verily encompassed with floating (though short) black hair; and laying both her hands into his, on whom now dwelled her soulful eyes, she replied to his impulsive quotation: "Like Niobe, all tears?" in touching notes of convincing candor:

"Niobe is as truly my name as yours is Raphael. All this you see is not deceptive gloom, a playground for romance, but sad reality; for know, my mother died this week; my father, the marchese, never ill before, then died of love for her. Thus I an orphan, and gloom hangs over my estate."

Then said Raphael to her: "Thus united also my parents pilgrimed into the Beyond. Like unto our parents we two will live for, and die with, each other."

And they were wedded; for thus it was decreed.

V.

DISENCHANTMENTS.

In due season the bride was to be taken to the artist's home. Neatly she laid out the route, whereof he, of course, fully approved. Yet something, she thought, weighed upon his mind; and with much coaxing she elicited the secret, that he longed to trace and further befriend the beautiful white steed, which longing she then shared.

By this new plan their wedding journey would (Fate willing) terminate in a pleasurable pedestrian tour.

They also agreed to transplant one of the rare rose bushes into their future home for ornament, or else model if (what was greatly doubted) corresponding supernal colors could be found on this earth.

Another glowing description of the rose garden was hesitatingly followed by the confession of his adventure with the giant warrior, related without reserve; and when praise was not withheld for the civilian's discretion in the matter, Raphael rapturously drew the bride to his heart, exclaiming, "One heart, one soul!"

Of baggage for shipment apparently there was no end! Yet still she urged: "I wonder whether your little house would hold the contents of seven more trunks; by my leaving your knapsack behind, the average would be adjusted."

"Heap on, Niobe!" quoth the husband, well pleased with her humor.

"And if you have a little garden, I should dearly love to—" This point was dropped, owing to a peculiar look of his, not then understood.

Of friends praying for early return none could replace the parents whom she had lost, none detract from the husband whom she followed.

A journey of happiness was theirs, during which they could not sufficiently extol the wisdom of Fate in having brought them together.

While lauding the immutability of love throughout the vicissitudes of everything else, they drew near to the station connected with Raphael's inspiration.

The tidy farm was apparently untenanted, save by a young eagle in vain striving to soar beyond its wire cage, of which lonely prison the observer made a note.

The adjacent garden of roses should have been the next point of interest. But what was the young husband's amazement, when, instead of exuberant flowerage, there arose before them a profusion of an entirely different kind of vegetation. In the center of that immense undulating field they found themselves surrounded by innumerable cumbersome cabbages—cabbage stumps, cabbage leaves, cabbage heads!

Turning in bewilderment toward Niobe, he asked: "Is it possible, sweet love, that cabbages be converted into moss roses for the

special benefit of a pilgrim on the wings of love?"

"Yes," was her laconic reply, followed by his ringing laughter and the consoling reflection that the artist needed not burden himself with an inimitable model.

Yet he rejoined: "And love alone produced the fragrancy inhaled by me amid the cabbages?" whereto she made answer, with great earnestness:

"Even as the broken lines of a circle are replenished by the imaginative eye, thus love rounds and perfects everything."

"And yet—" sighed he,

> "That slumbered I should have on cabbage—
> Cabbage-head for pillow,
> Cabbage-leaf for cover."

"Be calmed; they had no thorns."

> "Than that of yours no human word was e'er more true—
> A genuine thornless rose, my darling, you!"—

a happy repartee with many pleasantries in its wake.

To his stammered question: "The scintillating caves—whither have they flown?" she replied:

"No matter. Faith gained, the source is immaterial."

Now then for the rare mare, to be rescued from the ban of enchantment. "Or," he asked:

> " Is fancy of a lover also she,
> Forever lost to you and me?"

"A Pegasus, in quest of a new-born poet?" she queried quizzically.

The point whereto Raphael had effected his ascent afforded a view into the haunted district. There grazed no horse. The steepness of the rock precluded any attempt at descent. That anybody should ever have succeeded in such a climb was explained by the wonderful energy vouchsafed upon pressing occasions.

From a remoter cliff, which Niobe had climbed far ahead of Raphael, she called out to him:

"Lo, what a beauteous specimen
Of horse stands there exposed!
So white, so gentle as a lamb
For rural picture posed.

"What animates it? traces it
A foe? Each nerve aflame—
Its neck half turned; its stature doubly
High, a lion to shame.

"A change from state of ire to gesture
Of nobility:
Thy voice it knows, it hears; as noble
Man it waits for thee.

"Let toward it our way us wend;
I long to tender it my hand."

When she descended he called: "The centaur, I hope, hath no wings."

"What an unpoetic hope!" said she.

"Fear, rather, that he might soar with the new poetess beyond my reach."

Assisting her further downward Raphael still murmured admiringly: "Even no foreign accent in her poem's recitation!"

"Remember," murmured also she (not without a smile), "Shakespeare, my progenitor, as well as Dante."

A toilsome *détour* brought them at last to the laurel bush, and there the faithful animal, as if having incessantly, confidently waited for him, saluted her friend with joyous neighing, at the spot where he had deserted her; and to Niobe, evidently so attached to him, she stretched forth the elegant right hoof; whereupon lady and horse shook lily-white hoof and hand.

Even in broad daylight were outlines of a grim warrior then traceable in the castellated rock.

Raphael disappeared from the scene, to reappear on the height where a protuberance indicated a semblance of the giant's ear. Into it the civilian anon hallooed: "Grow wise, middle-aged man! and fight but those of your age and awkward stamp!" which exhortation caused no end of merriment among the lovers.

After this ceremony the enchanted forest was to be traversed.

The mare following them, as if by agreement (at a polite distance), Niobe asked: "Have you a stall for her near your hut?"

"I shall find a cot." This lightly, with the expression, which had perplexed her before, and would soon be understood.

The forest's shady, caressing hospitability seemed little to differ from that of ordinary woods, save that each flower regarded the travelers with a certain mysterious pensive dreaminess, as yet unknown to Niobe and Raphael.

"Theirs dusk and dawn;
The day our own—"

sang the poet, and, with day for helpmate, obstructions of all sorts were gracefully overcome by the three, as also the embarrassment touching the mare's passage over the river; for the spirited being dashed into it, and kept pace with the boat.

If kindly nymphs lent aid it was invisibly. How to reward or please them was discussed with humorous zeal, yet without result. Of flowers, weeds and webs they had plenty; and what were pleasing to their palates, who knew

until a midnight sail at full moontime might reveal?

The sun laid his rays tenderly on the gentle horse; in prancing gait it accompanied its deliverers.

VI.

A PARADISE.

Upon entering a magnificent estate, whose exuberant borders had already attracted the eye from afar, Raphael was held back by the bride. Her finger pointed to a sign, "Private property," upon a gate of extreme grandeur. Then he, embracing her, said smilingly: "Thine it is, sweet love, and mine; and where the sensitive willow beckons to us——"

"How like a tree of heaven!" she interrupted, "so immaculate, so high!"

"—yonder glass-house," he continued, "is our abode of joy."

Joy there henceforth lived indeed. Each room a token of, a promise for, halcyon days.

Glass-house, a name equally well chosen, as that most extensive manor was so amply sup-

plied with windows that from any standpoint views were granted upon manifold scenery—views upon discreetly distributed belvederes, their winding stairs entwined with trailing plants; each structure at a select spot, among them an emerald pool, the fashionable resort of gold-, sun- and silver-fishes. Then again natural elevations displayed to view many a cascade, emitting pearls and opals—so sparkling the foam.

Nearby many a meandering path (each path token of, promise for, halcyon days) was daintily bounded by frames of flower-bed pictures. Profuse array of beaming flowers:

Sweet scents, from many climes
Wafted, move Heaven's chimes.

Flowerage of rainbow bent:
Highroad to Heaven's tent.

Fragrance and holy hue
Soul-life with Heaven imbue.

In the distance there towered groups of trees,

denominated Monarchs of my Paradise by Raphael.

And joy was no less the share of the many animals in the park. No beast of burden was suffered there—at least none from which the burden was not taken; nor were the rural railings, inclosing, within the vast one, many a separate park, erected for imprisonment, but for protection.

Niobe's black attire soon gave way to white as eminently adapted also to mourning, since pure white reflects the luminous raiment of the departed.

Day by day disclosed a wife to be an invaluable blessing; and the husband's fear that by the bond of matrimony all other Madonnas would be distanced, was dispelled through the sociability of his attractive wife.

"How queen-like is her appearance; and his —how like a demigod's!" said friends of them.

By means of her cultivation the artist had also learned that he could not reach his ideal;

and that it could be approached in no better way than by artistic manipulation of their park. To it, then, he devoted his energies; procured choice plants (his paints he called them) from all parts of the globe, and assigned to each collection a special district then named after the beauties' native country.

Additions have augmented; and the map of this idealized world, this new Paradise, is rapidly being completed.

Thus the brook which, with many an artificial curve, runs through the whole estate, officiates as the Amazon, Danube, Niagara, according to the country that it fructifies; ever, rippling or gushing, extolling the beauty of the new world. Tiers of precious stones hold the bridges, spanned over the rivers. Even where the brook narrows down to a brooklet there are bridges (these of bamboo), because in the haunts of birds and butterflies also abound elves, who not always care to fly.

So pleased is Niobe with her new home that she cares not to return to the old one; but dis-

posed of her rich inheritance, the proceeds being partly used toward a painting—in very natural colors—of the cypress-enshrined garden, in which Raphael found her; and in that part of Italy, with its jessamines and pomegranates, blooms their favorite arbor.

How often they, with clasped hands, there remember the moment of their first meeting, and ever new words of love flow into such remembrances!

A perplexing utterance, deeply engraven in Niobe's heart, was that of nymphs who had of late floated round Raphael's moonlit boat. "Love, love, O love!" had they entreated.

Too indefinite this expression of theirs: yet how teeming with meaning. "Love, love! But whom?" had Niobe asked in the arbor.

"Me, of course!" was the laughing answer.

Then Niobe, in sober earnest whenever love is concerned, rejoined: "No, Raphael; they surely solicited for love more extended."

"Well, then," said he appeasingly, yielding to her mood, "universal, helpful love," which

interpretation they adopted and act upon, in the hope that their good deeds may, if but indirectly, also reach their wreathed friends in the haunted river.

No festive occasion the august couple, whose wisdom holds Paradise, allows to pass without also furthering the happiness of some of their dumb friends.

Thus a purchase-order for the imprisoned eagle had been given, and the self-same cage was deposited in the park. The poor bird had but slightly grown. As heretofore, it again spread its wings, repeatedly hopping up against the wire, then falling back with a look pitiful to behold. But when Niobe had lifted the barrier—lo and behold!—the eagle rose with joyful note, and triumphantly soared higher and higher. And on the following day (which was but yesterday) an olive branch descended from height unknown into the heart of America; an event no doubt gratifying to denizens of that hemisphere. Celebrations these, betokening beautiful progress since the time of sacrifices.

And upon this new world shine sun, moon and stars. Upon wickedness they indeed shine too, but only in order to expose and bring to justice. Over this Paradise, however, the Lights of Heaven love to linger, because they love Love and Peace, and are made happy by blessing both.

And as Raphael and Niobe derive happiness from the joy they impart to others, the park has become a resort for many, all of whom there pass delightful times under the refining influence of the language of Nature.

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